

**LIBERIA COUNTRY REPORT****OCTOBER 2003****COUNTRY INFORMATION & POLICY UNIT**[I Scope of the document](#)[II Geography](#)[III Economy](#)[IV History](#)[V State Structures](#)[VIa Human Rights Issues](#)[VIb Human Rights - Specific Groups](#)[VIc Human Rights - Other Issues](#)[Annex A - Chronology](#)[Annex B - Political Organisations](#)[Annex C - Prominent People](#)[Annex D - References to Source Material](#)**1. Scope of Document**

**1.1** This report has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a wide variety of recognised sources. The document does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.

**1.2** The report has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom.

**1.3** The report is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. These sources have been checked for currency, and as far as can be ascertained, remained relevant and up to date at the time the document was issued.

**1.4** It is intended to revise the report on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum-seeker producing countries in the United Kingdom.

**2. Geography**

**2.1** The Republic of Liberia is a coastal West African state of approximately 97,754 sq kms, bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, Republic of Guinea to the north and Côte d'Ivoire to the east. The capital city is Monrovia. The country is divided into sixteen counties, each having its own administrative centre. Liberia experiences a distinct rainy season, between May and October, with a short break in the southern coastal region, and is generally hot and humid throughout the year. The country consists of a wide coastal plain, with several low-lying hill ranges inland, and is densely forested in most parts. Liberia has a population of approximately 3 million. The population is divided into 16 main indigenous tribal groups, plus groups of non-tribal Liberians and non-Liberian Africans. **[1][2]** For further information on geography, refer to Europa Yearbook source **[1]**.

### 3. Economy

**3.1** Liberia is a very poor country with a market-based economy that has not developed due to 14 years of civil conflict and unrest. Few statistics are available, but it is unlikely that there has been any real growth during 2002. [2]

**3.2** Average per capita income was estimated at less than \$170. An estimated 80% of the population lives on less than \$1 per day, and there is high unemployment. The absence of infrastructure throughout the country continued to depress the economy, despite rich natural resources and potential self-sufficiency in food. Government officials have exploited the country's natural resources for personal profit. Extortion is widespread in all levels of society. [2]

### 4. History

**4.1** Liberia was established as an independent state by freed slaves from America in 1847. The Constitution is loosely based on that of the US. For more than 130 years after independence, politics were dominated by descendants of the original settlers, known as the Americo-Liberians. In 1980 Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, an indigenous member of the Krahn ethnic group, seized power in a military coup. Widespread human rights abuses followed, creating internal instability and international condemnation. On Christmas Eve 1989, the National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, began a revolt which quickly became an ethnically-based civil war between the Krahn and Mandingo dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and the Gio and Mano NPFL. The conflict led to the collapse of the Doe dictatorship and his execution in 1990 by an offshoot of the NPFL. [6]

**4.2** Liberia was in a state of civil war from 1989 to 1997. This war only ended when President Charles Taylor took power, after elections on 19 July 1997. However, President Taylor's legitimacy was contested by rebel groups, and his control did not extend to the whole of the country; particularly the border region in the north. [1][4][6] President Taylor stood down from office in August 2003, and has since left Liberia. His Vice President Moses Zeh Blah has replaced him as interim president. [8] For further information on history, refer to Europa Yearbook source [1].

### 5. STATE STRUCTURE

[Part I](#)

[Part II](#)

#### 5. State Structures

## The Constitution

**5.1** The 1984 Liberian Constitution provides for certain fundamental human rights, and is supported by a theoretically independent judiciary. However, the unrest and violence that has dominated recent Liberian history, has resulted in its provisions not being respected. Tribal affiliations and loyalties, together with corruption and general inefficiency, also played significant roles in the Liberian way of life, and have all been major factors affecting the impartiality of the police, judiciary and other Government bodies. [1][2]

## Citizenship

**5.2** The requirements for citizenship are set out in chapter IV of the Liberian Constitution. Citizenship would appear to be acquired by descent from a Liberian citizen. Dual nationals must, upon reaching maturity, renounce any other citizenship that they may hold by descent from a foreign national. One of the requirements to acquire citizenship, is that a person is of "Negroes or of Negro descent", which effectively bars non-African minorities from becoming Liberian citizens. There is limited information regarding the acquisition of citizenship, but naturalisation is referred to in the Constitution. [2][9]

## Political System

**5.3** The Constitution provides for the right to vote in free and fair elections. In 1997 elections were held that international observers deemed administratively free and transparent; however, the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation, as it was believed that military forces loyal to Charles Taylor would have resumed the civil war if he lost the election. Since the legislative elections were held on the basis of proportional representation, President Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) won control of the legislature by the same 75% majority that he received in the popular vote for the presidency. The 1997 legislative and presidential elections were held under a special election law in accordance with the terms of the Abuja Peace Process. [2][7]

## Judiciary

**5.4** The judiciary is divided into four levels, under a Supreme Court. All levels of the court system in Monrovia, including the Supreme Court, function sporadically. However, the Government's efforts to revitalise the court system outside of Monrovia continued to be hindered by a lack of trained personnel, a lack of infrastructure, and inadequate funding. Judges were assigned throughout the country, but in some cases they were unable to hold court due to lack of resources. [2]

**5.5** The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but judges are subjected to political, social, familial, and financial pressures, leading to the corruption of the judiciary. Some judges and magistrates have limited legal training and experience, but it is not feasible to retire all judicial personnel who are not legally trained. The judiciary intends to replace those currently sitting as they retire with lawyers. By statute, members of the bar must be graduates of a law school and pass the bar examination. During 2002, the Liberian Government continued to exert undue influence on the judiciary, which undermines the authority of the courts. [2]

**5.6** Courts regularly received bribes or other illegal gifts out of damages that they awarded in civil cases. Those who are accused of crimes are often advised to pay a gratuity to appease judges, prosecutors, and police officers to secure favourable rulings. In 2000 the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court stated publicly that delays in salary payments to judicial personnel contributed to corruption in the judiciary. [2]

**5.7** Under the Constitution, defendants have rights to a fair trial that conform to internationally accepted standards. However, in practice these are not always observed. Defendants have the right to a public trial and timely consultation with an attorney. There is no effective system to provide legal representation, especially in rural areas, but some NGO's provide legal services to the poor and others without access to free representation. [2]

**5.8** Clan chieftains continued to use the traditional practice of trial-by-ordeal to resolve criminal cases in rural areas. The Supreme Court ruled that trial-by-ordeal, commonly the placement of a heated metal object on a suspect's body, in an attempt to determine whether the defendant is telling the truth, is unconstitutional. However, the practice continued under an executive order. A local human rights organisation has urged that trial-by-ordeal be abolished throughout the country, but further action has not been taken. [2]

## Legal Rights/Detention

**5.9** The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, but arbitrary arrest by Security Personal remains common. The Constitution provides for legal safeguard for those who are accused of crimes, including warrants for arrests and the right of detainees either to be charged or released within 48 hours. The Government generally adheres to these standards, but warrants were not always based on sufficient evidence, and detainees, especially those without the means to hire a lawyer, are often held for more than 48 hours without charge. In some cases, persons were detained secretly at unofficial detention centres including one at the Executive Mansion. The Constitution provides for the right of a person who is charged to receive an expeditious trial; however, lengthy pre-trial and pre-arraignment detention remained a serious problem. In some cases, the length of the pre-trial

detention equalled or exceeded the length of sentence for the crime in question. [2]

**5.10** The police only have limited logistics and forensic capabilities and cannot adequately investigate many crimes, including murder cases. When the courts release known criminals for lack of evidence, police officers often arrest them again on false charges. [2]

### **Death Penalty**

**5.11** Liberia retains the death penalty, but there have been no reports of it being used in recent years. [38]

### **Internal Security**

**5.12** The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) is the main rebel group, which was opposed to the Taylor regime. LURD is reported to be backed by Guinea, and has received arms and supplies from there. The organisation is reported to have recruited fighters from Guinea, Sierra Leone and other West African countries. There were also reports that Guinea is using LURD as a proxy force to put pressure on the Liberian Government. Liberia and Guinea have in the past few years clashed repeatedly on their common border, and Guinea has accused the Liberian Government of backing rebels in that country. [10][11]

**5.13** LURD is mostly based in the north of the country, particularly around Lofa County, and the northern Mandingo tribe is reported to be supporting it. Another group, that opposed Taylor's rule, is the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) This is a southern-based organisation, backed by the Ivory Coast, and the Krahn tribe. The Liberian Government has described MODEL as a wing of LURD, but while it only came to prominence in early 2003, it would appear to have its own leadership structure and organisation. These groups are loosely organised, and so it is possible that members of other tribal groups could also be supporters. LURD and MODEL are co-operating with each other, and have taken part in the peace talks in Accra. [12][13][35][41][42]

**5.14** In March 2003, LURD launched an offensive against Liberian Government forces. MODEL appears to have been able to co-ordinate its activities with those of LURD, which prevented President Taylor's forces from responding effectively. Rebel forces were able to attack Monrovia on a number of occasions in June and July 2003. Rebel forces, mostly from LURD, were able to capture areas of Monrovia itself, including the port area. The rebels have since withdrawn to positions outside the city. Hundreds of civilians have been wounded or killed as a result of this upsurge in violence, with credible reports stating that the casualties were in the thousands. [14][15][35]

**5.15** A cease-fire was agreed on 17 June 2003, at a meeting between the Liberian Government, LURD and MODEL held in Accra, Ghana, but it was not respected. There was continued violence throughout late June and July 2003, as rebel groups and Government supporters fought for control of areas of Monrovia. [14][15] On 4 August 2003, Nigerian soldiers landed at Liberia's international airport as the first units of a peacekeeping force to Liberia. [18]

**5.16** President Taylor stood down from Office on 11 August 2003, which was a non-negotiable requirement of both LURD and MODEL. He left Liberia on the same day to take up residence in Nigeria. However, he is facing an indictment by the Special Court in Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity. This is because of his support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), during the civil war in that country. Vice President Moses Zeh Blah has replaced him as interim President. [8][39]

**5.17** A peace agreement was signed in Ghana on 18 August 2003. This provides for an interim Government, which will take power, for a two-year period, from mid October 2003, and after that period there will then be elections. This Government will be made up of representatives of the present Government, rebel groups, political parties and civil groups. There will also be a programme for disbanding militia groups. [19][20] An interim President has been named, Gyude Bryant, a businessman from Monrovia. [47]

**5.18** There has been a reduction in violence in areas where peacekeepers have been deployed, particularly around Monrovia, but the situation remains tense. There have been clashes between rebels and Government forces, in particular there is heightened tension between MODEL and Government forces in the south of the country around the port city of Buchanan. The city is reported to be controlled by rebel forces. [18][21][22]

### **Border security and relations with neighbouring countries**

**5.19** The Mano River Union (MRU) was formed in 1973 to establish a customs and economic union between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Subsequently, members signed a mutual non-aggression pact and pledged to establish a permanent mechanism for conflict prevention. Despite this, relations between the three countries have at times been poor, and the MRU has failed to live up to its original ideals. For years there has been tension and conflict between Liberia and Guinea. Between August 2000 and April 2001 forces loyal to President Taylor attacked areas of southern Guinea. Guinea responded robustly to these incursions. Liberia has accused Guinea of sponsoring LURD, but Guinea denies this. [6]

**5.20** Liberia has involved itself in the recent uprising in Côte d'Ivoire. Liberian troops, militia groups and mercenaries have been involved in fighting looting and human rights abuses in the west of Côte d'Ivoire. Liberian civilians fleeing the conflict have faced reprisals from the Ivorian population. Côte d'Ivoire is reported to be supporting MODEL, and this may be a means of putting pressure on Liberia. [6][13]

### **Prisons and Prison conditions**

**5.21** Prison conditions remained harsh, and in some cases, life threatening. There were credible reports of unofficial detention facilities, including one at the Executive Mansion, in which detainees were held without charge and in some cases tortured. The Government did not provide detainees or prisoners with adequate food or medical care. Cells at Monrovia Central Prison are overcrowded, mostly with detainees awaiting trial. Only approximately 10% of the total prison population have been convicted of criminal offences. Convicted prisoners and detainees awaiting trial are not held in separate facilities. Similar conditions exist in the Barclay Training Centre military stockade. In some parts of Liberia, the structure that serves as a prison consists of a container with bars at one end. There also were reports that local officials forced convicted prisoners to work for them. [2]

**5.22** Women, who constituted about 5% of the prison population, were held in separate cells. Their conditions were comparable to those of the male prisoners and detainees. There were no separate facilities for juvenile offenders. Women, and particularly juveniles, were subject to abuse by guards or other inmates. [2]

**5.23** In a number of cases, human rights groups and interested individuals achieved the release of detainees and prisoners. However, for the most part, these cases tended to be non-political in nature. The Government generally permits the independent monitoring of prison conditions by local human rights groups, the media, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); however, visits to unofficial detention centres are often denied. The ICRC is allowed to visit persons held in prison facilities and police detention centres without third parties present and to make regular repeat visits. [2]

### **Armed forces**

**5.24** The regular security forces include the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and the Liberia National Police (LNP), which has primary responsibility for internal security. Other units are the Anti-terrorist Unit (ATU), also called the Antiterrorist Brigade (ATB), composed of an elite special forces group, and the Special Security Service (SSS), a large, heavily armed executive protective force. The ATU absorbed President Taylor's most experienced civil war fighters, including undisciplined and untrained loyalists. There also are numerous irregular security services attached to certain key ministries and parastatal corporations; the responsibilities of these units appear to be poorly defined. [2]

**5.25** The national army, which fought against President Taylor's faction during the civil war, has yet to be downsized and restructured as required by the 1996 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)-brokered Abuja Peace Accords. During 2002, several thousand troops deployed in northern counties were fighting armed dissidents; however, there were few troops deployed to maintain security in other rural areas of the country. Fighting between the security forces and the LURD rebels intensified and spread towards Monrovia during the first half of 2002. The Government offered a general amnesty to LURD fighters, but few accepted this. During 2002, security forces frequently acted independently of government authority, particularly in rural areas. Members of the security forces have committed numerous, serious human rights abuses. [2][10][11]

### **Military Service**

**5.26** There is no conscription in Liberia. However, both rebel and Government militias have forcibly recruited people into their ranks, and these recruits have included children. [2][16][23]

### **Medical Services**

**5.27** The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is hard to estimate because of unrest, but in 1999 it was estimated to be 2.8% of the population. However, there are indications that the true percentage is much higher, as the level

of untreated sexually transmitted diseases is very high, and this is probably reflected in the percentage of the population with HIV/AIDS. [24a][24b][24c] Infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are high, and life expectancy is low at around 41 years of age. [25]

**5.28** The medical infrastructure, which had already been damaged by years of civil conflict, was in a poor state of repair before the latest upsurge in violence. Fighting has meant that there has been no improvement in the availability of health care, but instead a marked deterioration. NGOs, on which many Liberians depended for basic medical assistance, were not able to operate during periods of intense fighting. Though many NGOs have resumed operations, the situation remains very poor, even in areas where it is relatively peaceful. There have been outbreaks of disease throughout the country, and an effective response has been hindered by the continuing violence. [26][27][47]

**5.29** In Monrovia the lack of medical supplies, food, adequate sanitation, and damage to the city's water supply caused by fighting, has made the health crisis much worse. Large numbers of people are seeking shelter in the city, which has added to the difficulty in providing adequate assistance. Civilians have also been caught up in the fighting in Monrovia. While it is not clear if they have been deliberately targeted, there have been a large number of casualties, possibly in the thousands. [14][15][26][27][28]

### **People with disabilities**

**5.30** As a result of the civil war, a large number of persons have permanent disabilities, in addition to those disabled by accident or illness. It is illegal to discriminate against persons with disabilities; however, in practice they do not enjoy equal access to public buildings or government services. No laws mandate accessibility to public buildings or services. Persons with disabilities face discrimination, particularly in rural areas. Babies with deformities were often abandoned. Some NGOs provide services to persons with disabilities. [2]

**5.31** In light of the continued conflict, there is limited information regarding the availability of care of the disabled. However, as there is a major health crisis within the country, its provision must be limited. [26][27]

### **Educational System**

**5.32** Primary and secondary education is largely free, and officially compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16 years, the closure or disruption of educational institutions during the civil war has deprived many children of even basic education in Liberia since 1990. [1][2]

**5.33** The Government is generally unable to provide for adequate education. Due to the poor condition of public schools, many children, particularly in Monrovia, who attended school, went to private institutions. Since many private schools still need to be refurbished due to wartime damage, school fees were increased significantly, thereby making education unattainable for many school-age children. In both public and private schools, families of children are often asked to provide their own books, pencils, and paper. In 2001, 1.05 million out of an estimated 1.7 million school-age children, less than half of whom were girls, were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Expenditure on education was estimated at \$2.4 million (167 million Liberian Dollars). In 1995 the literacy rate was 53.9% for boys and 22.4% for girls. [2]

## **LIBERIA COUNTRY REPORT**

**OCTOBER 2003**

## COUNTRY INFORMATION &amp; POLICY UNIT

## 6. Human Rights

### 6.A Human Rights Issues

#### [Part I](#)

#### [Part II](#)

## 6. Human Rights

### 6.A Human Rights Issues

#### Overview

**6.1** The Government's human rights record remains poor. During 2002, it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. The security forces committed many unlawful killings, and were accused of the disappearances of numerous persons, especially ethnic Mandingos suspected of antigovernment sympathies. Security forces frequently tortured, beat, and otherwise abused or humiliated citizens. The Government investigated some of the alleged abuses by the security forces; however, abusers were rarely charged or disciplined. There were also reports of torture and human rights abuses by rebel forces. [2]

**6.2** The Government's Human Rights Commission remained inactive throughout 2002. This Commission has yet to receive funding, and the Senate again failed to confirm the appointments of three of its five commissioners. Both local and international NGOs are permitted to operate within Liberia, but subject to some limitations. [2]

#### Freedom of Speech and the Media

**6.3** Government officials have, with some notable exceptions, reluctantly tolerated the press. However, they frequently rebuked the media publicly for what they considered negative reporting of events. The Government also announced the creation of a media advisory committee to reduce tensions between the Government and the press, but this body has had little effect. The Government requires that foreign journalists provide a minimum of 72-hours advance notice of intent to enter the country and a 24-hour waiting period for accreditation after arrival. The Government also ordered local journalists to clear reporting on fighting in the border areas. [2]

**6.4** Reporting that criticised the Government brought threats of violence, closure, or directives from powerful Government figures to advertisers that they should discontinue business with that media outlet. Management of the one printing facility capable of producing newspapers is subject to pressure from the Government. [2]

**6.5** In order to meet cost, the typical newspaper's eight pages include two or three pages of advertisements or paid announcements, further reducing the amount of news reported. Some articles included are the result of gifts or money that supplement reporters' meagre salaries. The Press Union of Liberia, an independent association of journalists, secured a license to begin independent press operations, but internal problems prevented the actual start of operations. [2]

**6.6** In Monrovia eight newspapers were published during 2002, although some were published very irregularly. Two are independent dailies and five generally appeared once or more a week; they vary in their political balance. The Public Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism publishes one newspaper, and the communications network owned by the President publishes one weekly newspaper. The ruling party also publishes a newspaper. Due to the high price of newspapers, the high rate of illiteracy, high transportation costs, and the poor state of roads elsewhere in the country, newspaper distribution generally is limited to the Monrovia area. As a result, radio is the primary means of mass communication. [2]

**6.7** There are several FM stations in Monrovia; two private commercial stations (DC-101); and Radio Veritas, which operated

under the Catholic Archdiocese. There is also the state-run national station (ELBC), and FM and short-wave stations operated by President Taylor's private Liberia Communications Network (LCN). There is a French broadcast through the national radio facility, a religious, and a growing number of small local stations in cities around the country. Call-in radio talk shows are popular and are frequently a forum for both government and opposition viewpoints; however, they sometimes resulted in threats, generally from the Government, party leaders, and security agents to the radio hosts and station managers. Interviews with prominent persons are broadcast frequently. [2]

**6.8** Due to the economic situation in the country and the dependence on generators requiring expensive fuel, most stations limited broadcast hours and in some cases ceased operation for short periods. Television is limited to those who can purchase sets, the generators, and fuel to provide electricity. For those persons and businesses with satellite capability, the Cable News Network is available. There are two television stations: the LCN, and the Ducor Broadcasting Corporation. [2]

**6.9** Several new Internet cafes have opened in Monrovia, but relatively high fees limit access. The Government continued to charge that its opponents used the Internet to wage a propaganda war. However, the Ministry of Information also maintains an unofficial website, [allaboutliberia.com](http://allaboutliberia.com), which promotes a pro-government view. Two Internet Service Providers (ISPs) operated in Monrovia and both are linked to prominent persons. Some people believe that government security personnel monitor the Internet, especially e-mail. [2]

### Journalists

**6.10** In general journalists were outspoken and even provocative. In September 2002, the press printed stories alleging that the son of the former President, Charles Taylor Jr., was involved in the death of his driver. However, journalists also practised self-censorship, especially in regard to information about the President and his immediate family members. [2]

**6.11** In March 2002, Jerome Dalieh and Bill Jarkloh, editor and news editor, respectively, of The News newspaper were detained in connection with a story that Police Director Mulbah deemed to be "anti-reconciliation." The two were released the same day. [2]

**6.12** On 26 April 2002, the Government shut down The Analyst newspaper following its publication of a speech by human rights attorney Tiawan Gongole. On 5 June 2002, The Analyst resumed publication. In June 2002, the editor-in-chief of The Analyst, Hassan Bility, who the Government had harassed for years, was arrested and accused of harboring LURD sympathies. The Press Union of Liberia issued several well-publicised calls that demanded Bility be released or publicly charged and tried. Amnesty International (AI) conducted a global letter writing campaign on his behalf during 2002. [2]

**6.13.** Security personnel sometimes interpreted criticism as a licence to harass, threaten, arrest, and even assault targeted persons. The Government has often required arrested journalists to apologise in writing prior to releasing them. [2]

### Freedom of Religion

**6.14** The Constitution provides for freedom of religion. The Government generally respects this right in practice, but there are some exceptions. There is no established state religion. However, Government ceremonies invariably open and close with prayer and may include the singing of hymns. All organisations, including religious groups, must register their articles of incorporation with the Government, along with a statement of the organisation's purpose. However, traditional indigenous religious groups are not required to register, and generally do not. Registration is routine, and there have been no reports that the registration process is burdensome or discriminatory in its administration. [3]

**6.15** Some tensions exist between the major religious communities. The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, Islamic leaders complained of societal discrimination against Muslims. The private sector in urban areas, particularly in the capital, gives preference to Christianity in civic ceremonies and observances, and discrimination against followers of other organised religions spills over into areas of individual opportunity and employment. Most Mandingos and hence most Muslims were allied with factions that opposed President Taylor during the civil war and still belong to opposition parties. However, in March 2002, President Taylor sponsored the travel of more than 100 pilgrims to Mecca. There is an interfaith council that brings together leaders of the Christian and Islamic faiths, and this body has mediated between the Government, LURD and MODEL. [3][6]

**6.16** Government forces have been accused of serious human rights abuses against suspected rebels and sympathisers in fighting in Lofa County. The Government contends that the insurgents are mostly Mandingo Muslims of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Kromah (ULIMO-K); a group that fought against President Taylor's forces during the civil war. The Government has taken action against Muslims in Lofa County, who it believes are supporting opposition groups. However, its inaction over reports of abuses by its forces in Lofa County, has contributed to ethnic tension between Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups in that area. [3]

**6.17** Ritual killings, in which body parts used in traditional indigenous rituals are removed from the victim, continue to occur. The number of such killings is difficult to ascertain, since police often describe deaths as accidents even when body parts have been removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumoured to be the work of ritual killers. Little reliable



information appears to be readily available about traditions associated with ritual killings. It is believed that practitioners of traditional indigenous religions among the Grebo and Krahn ethnic groups concentrated in the south-eastern counties most commonly engage in ritual killings. The victims are usually members of the religious group performing the ritual. Body parts of a member whom the group believes to be powerful are believed to be the most effective ritually. Body parts most frequently removed include the heart, liver, and genitals. There have been reports that some of these rituals involve eating body parts. The underlying religious beliefs may be related to incidents during the civil war in which faction leaders sometimes ate (and in which one faction leader had himself filmed eating) body parts of former leaders of rival factions. Removal of body parts for use in traditional rituals is believed to be the motive for ritual killings, rather than an abuse incidental to killings committed for other motives. Ritual murders for the purpose of obtaining body parts traditionally were committed by religious group members called "heart men," but since the civil war, common criminals inured to killing also may sell body parts. [3]

### Religious groups

**6.18** Approximately 40% of the population practice either Christianity or elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions, with another 40% practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. Approximately 20% of the population practice Islam. The Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and AME Zion denominations, as well as several Pentecostal churches, are represented in the Christian community. Some of the Pentecostal movements are independent, while others are affiliated with churches outside the country. There is also a small Baha'i community. Christianity, traditional indigenous religions, and syncretistic religions combining elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions are found throughout the country. Islam is prevalent only among members of the Mandingo ethnic group, who are concentrated in the northern and eastern counties, and among the Vai ethnic group in the northwest. Foreign missionary groups in the country include Baptists, Catholics, and Jehovah's Witnesses. [3]

### Freedom of Assembly & Association

**6.19** The Constitution provides for the right of peaceful assembly; however, on 26 April 2002, Minister of Justice Eddington Varmah announced that all "public gatherings", arranged without the prior approval of the Ministry, were banned. Requests for exemptions were denied. President Taylor defended the ban by arguing that dissidents might use mass rallies to incite insurrection. The annual May parade by journalists to commemorate World Press Freedom Day was not allowed; however, indoor sessions marking the occasion did take place. On 14 September 2002, the ban on political gatherings was lifted. While announcing the state of emergency in February 2002, President Taylor warned that antigovernment views would not be tolerated during the crisis. [2]

**6.20** The Constitution provides for the right of association, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. There were 18 political parties registered by the end of 2002. On 23 July 2002, the Election Commission certified the New Democratic Alternative for Liberia (New Deal Movement) as a fully registered political party, which operated freely during 2002. Dozens of civil society organisations, organised around themes such as human rights, women's issues, development objectives, poverty alleviation, health concerns, and workers' associations were active. [2]

### Employment Rights

**6.21** The Constitution provides that workers have the right to associate in trade unions, except for members of the military and police, and workers are allowed to join unions in practice. The Constitution also provides that unions are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity. However, Government interference in union activities, especially union elections and leaderships struggles, was common both before and during the civil war. Economic activity was interrupted by the war, but unions proliferated. There are approximately 30 functioning unions organised loosely under two umbrella groups the Federation of Liberian Trade Unions and the Congress of Liberian Trade Unions with the common objective of protecting the rights of their 60,000 members, who were largely unemployed. The actual power that the unions exercised was extremely limited. Since the country's work force is largely illiterate, economic activities beyond the subsistence level were very limited, and the labour laws tend to favour management. [2]

**6.22** During 2002, the Government strictly enforced the union registration requirements that fell into disuse during the war. Applicants needed to register at two different ministries, and processing time was arbitrary, taking only a few days for some, with registration never being issued to others. Labour unions traditionally have been affiliated with international labour groups such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. [2]

**6.23** Except for civil servants, workers (including employees of public corporations and autonomous agencies) have the right to organise and bargain collectively. In the past, agreements were negotiated freely between workers and their employers without government interference; however, these rights were largely unused during 2002 because of the lack of economic activity. Labour laws provide for the right to strike, but these were nullified by a People's Redemption Council decree in 1984 that outlawed strikes. However, this decree has not been enforced for many years. Due to the damage done to the economy by years of civil conflict, and the estimated 85% unemployment rate, strikes are infrequent. [2]

### People Trafficking

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ppage.asp?section=4379&title=Liberia%2C%20Country%20Informat...> 11/18/2003

**6.24** The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons; however, there were no reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country. Forced labour is common, particularly that of children, and, given the unrest in Liberia, it is possible that trafficking would not be reported. [2]

## **Freedom of Movement**

**6.25** The Constitution provides for these rights; however, the Government restricted them in practice. Security forces maintained checkpoints where travellers were routinely subjected to arbitrary searches and petty extortion. Security forces were also accused of beating and robbing internally displaced persons (IDP's) fleeing fighting in Lofa County. Security forces also extorted money from returning refugees. Temporary checkpoints have been occasionally set up by units of the ATB, citing security concerns. [2]

**6.26** In 2002, unlike in the previous year, the Government did not restrict the issuing of passports or require those leaving the country to obtain an exit visa. However, in October 2002, passport services were suspended due to fraud concerns and subsequent investigations. [2]

## **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

**6.27** In November 2002, relief agencies estimated there were nearly 130,000 IDPs in more than a dozen camps in 5 separate counties. The number of IDPs increased by approximately 70,000 during 2002, due to conflicts in Lofa, Bong, Bomi, Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu Counties. International and local NGOs had limited funding and resources to assist these IDPs. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported from mid-year estimates that there were approximately 107,000 Liberian refugees in Guinea, 71,000 in Cote d'Ivoire, 38,000 in Sierra Leone, 11,000 in Ghana, and 3,000 in other countries. [2]

**6.28** The law provides for the granting of asylum and refugee status in accordance with the provisions of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government continued to provide first asylum to nearly 20,000 refugees, the vast majority of whom were from Sierra Leone. Approximately 55,000 refugees from Sierra Leone were repatriated during 2002. The Government generally co-operated with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations in assisting refugees; however, AFL and ATU units and LURD rebels were responsible for hundreds of cases of abuse against individual refugees. In June 2002, LURD rebels attacked the camp at Sinje and abducted five Liberian nurses. In September 2002 the nurses were released just across the Guinean border. The violence forced 11,000 to 12,000 Sierra Leoneans, 8,000 IDPs, and several thousand Sinje residents to flee. Approximately 1,500 IDPs fled across the border into Sierra Leone during 2002. [2]

**6.29** Recent fighting would mean that the present figure of IDPs can only be estimated, and this was given as 500,000 in September 2003. Many thousands are reluctant to return to their home areas for fear of further fighting. Many IDPs were displaced on more than one occasion, when fighting spread to areas that had previously been considered safe. [27][29]

**6.30** The recent fighting has also caused more people to seek shelter in Monrovia. In September 2003 there were an estimated 300,000 IDPs sheltering within the city, with only limited provisions for their care. The lack of medicine, food, access to clean water and shelter has resulted in a serious health crisis, which international agencies are attempting to address. There have also been incidents of rape, and theft from IDPs is common. Both forces loyal to the Government and rebels have committed these crimes, which appear to have been mainly perpetrated by members of various militias. [17][28]

OCTOBER 2003

## COUNTRY INFORMATION &amp; POLICY UNIT

**6.B Human Rights - Specific Groups**[Part I](#)[Part II](#)**6.B Human Rights - Specific Groups****Ethnic Groups**

**6.31** There are 16 ethnic groups, and these indigenous tribes are the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo, and Mende. **[40]** The Kpelle in central and western Liberia is the largest ethnic group and makes up 20%, the Bassa make up 16%, the Gio make up 8% and Kru make up 7%. The remaining ethnic groups account for 49% of the population. Americo-Liberians, who are descendants of freed slaves that arrived in Liberia early in 1821, make up an estimated 5% of the population. There also is a sizeable number of Lebanese, Indians and other West African nationals who make up a significant part of Liberia's business community. The Americo-Liberian minority, descendants of freed slaves from the United States and the Caribbean, dominated the Government through the True Whig party until 1980. The indigenous ethnic groups generally speak distinct primary languages, and they are concentrated regionally. No ethnic group constitutes a majority of the population. **[2][4][6]**

**6.32** Although the Constitution bans ethnic discrimination, it also provides that only "persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent" may be citizens or own land. Many persons of Lebanese and Asian descent who were born or have lived most of their lives in the country are denied full rights as a result of this racial distinction. **[2]**

**6.33** Many members of the predominantly Muslim Mandingo minority encountered hostility when they sought to return, after the end of the civil war, to their villages in Lofa, Bong, and Nimba counties. Many Mandingos were unable to reoccupy their homes, which had been taken over by squatters. Members of the Lorma, Gio, and Mano minorities generally held all Mandingos responsible for atrocities committed by the ULIMO-K faction during the civil war. The lack of competent security forces and a fully functioning judiciary in these areas prevented many Mandingos from seeking redress. Mandingo citizens faced growing discrimination, arbitrary arrests, and violence based on their ethnicity. The continuing cross-border violence in Lofa County exacerbated ethnic tensions between the Mandingos and the Lormas. Recent tension with the Guinean Government aggravated unrest in Nimba between the Manos and Mandingos. **[2]**

**Women**

**6.34** Domestic violence against women is extensive, neither the Government, the courts, nor the media have addressed abuse as a serious problem. Several NGOs in Monrovia and Buchanan continued programmes to treat abused women and girls and increase awareness of their rights. **[2]**

**6.35** Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which is condemned widely by international public health experts as damaging to both physical and psychological health, was traditionally performed on young girls in ethnic groups in the northern, western, and central parts of the country, particularly in rural areas. Prior to the onset of the civil war in 1989, approximately 50% of women between the ages of 8 and 18 were subjected to FGM. A local organisation, Human Rights Watch Women and Children, which does not receive government funding, launched a campaign during 2001 to eradicate FGM. The Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia (AFELL) also has spoken out against FGM. **[2][5]**

**6.36** Social workers in Liberia estimate that more than 90% of rural women between the ages of 8 and 18 have undergone the practice. UN agencies, in collaboration with AFELL, said that they will lobby influential female legislators and judges to oppose FGM. Liberian human rights organisations have assured AFELL that they will lobby parliament to pass legislation against the practice. **[37]**

**6.37** Social structures and traditional institutions, such as the secret societies that often performed FGM as an initiation rite, were undermined by the war. While many experts believe that the incidence of FGM dropped to as low as 10% by the end of the war, traditional societies are re-establishing themselves throughout the country and the increase in the incidence of FGM continued. The most extreme form of FGM, infibulation, reportedly is not practised. The Government has taken no action against FGM. [2]

**6.38** The status of women varies by region, ethnic group, and religion. Before the outbreak of the civil war, women held one-fourth of the professional and technical jobs in Monrovia. On the whole, women have not recovered from the setbacks caused by the civil war, when most schools were closed, and they could not carry out their traditional roles in the production, allocation, and sale of food. [2]

**6.39** Women who were married under civil law can inherit land and property; however, women who married under traditional laws are considered the property of their husbands and are not entitled to inherit from their husbands or retain custody of their children if their husbands die. Women's organisations continued to press for legislation on behalf of inheritance rights in traditional marriages. There continued to be few projects to help former combatants reintegrate into society, and there were none specifically to benefit former female combatants. However, several women's organisations advanced family welfare issues, helped promote political reconciliation, and assisted in rehabilitating both former female combatants and women who were victims of the civil war. The Liberian chapter of the Mano River Women's Peace Network visited neighbouring countries during 2002 to promote regional peace and stability. [2]

**6.40** Professional women's groups, including lawyers, market women, and businesswomen, remained vocal about their concerns regarding social issues. However, Government officials often responded negatively to public criticism. There were credible reports of harassment and possible surveillance of outspoken critics. In 2001, the Government created the Ministry for Gender and Development, whose mandate included the promotion of the well being of women and girls. [2]

**6.41** In the aftermath of the recent fighting, gunmen from militias raped women who had been displaced. All sides committed these crimes, and the authorities have been unable to bring those responsible to justice. These crimes would appear to be opportunistic and indiscriminate, and to have been a result of the indiscipline within both rebel and Government ranks. [17]

## Children

**6.42** The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labour by children, but it has been reported that some former combatants, including some in the security forces, were accused of forcing children to work in the mining industry. A child rights advocacy group released a report on forced child labour in the south-eastern counties. The advocacy group's report and that of another prominent human rights group contradicted an earlier Government report that failed to find any conclusive evidence of forced child labour. Subsequently legislators from three counties sued the child rights advocacy group for defaming the counties' reputations. At the end of 2002, this case was still pending. [2]

**6.43** The law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 16 during school hours in the wage sector, but enforcement is lax. The Ministry of Labour did not make any inspections during 2002, and lacks the resources to carry out its mandate. Throughout rural areas, particularly where there were no schools, small children continued to assist their parents as vendors in local markets or on the streets, to take care of younger brothers and sisters, and to work on family subsistence farms. [2]

**6.44** Children were victimised and abused during the civil war. An estimated 50,000 children were killed; many more were injured, orphaned, or abandoned. Approximately 100 under funded orphanages operate in and around Monrovia; however, many orphans live outside these institutions. The National Military Families Association of Liberia (NAMFA) tries to provide for orphaned military children; it has registered 650 street children. These institutions do not receive any Government funding, but rely on public donations. Nearly all youths witnessed terrible atrocities, and some committed atrocities themselves. Approximately 21% (4,306) of the combatants who disarmed under the provisions of the Abuja Peace Accords were child soldiers under the age of 17. Many youths remain traumatised, and some still are addicted to drugs. The number of street children in Monrovia and the number of abandoned infants increased significantly following disarmament. NGO's and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued retraining and rehabilitation programmes for a limited number of former child fighters; however, these children were vulnerable to being recruited in sub-regional conflicts, since most had no other means of support. [2]

**6.45** There is little provision for the care of the many thousands of children displaced in the recent fighting. Both the Government and the rebel forces have recruited many children to serve as soldiers. Some of these children welcome this employment, either as a means of revenge, or survival. After the peace agreement some of these child soldiers were responsible for widespread looting and rapes, particularly of those displaced by the fighting. [16][17][26]

## Homosexuals

**6.46** Both male and female homosexuality is illegal. There are no reports of it being widely tolerated by society, or of there being a homosexual culture in Liberia. [31a][31b]

## Freedom of Movement

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## 6.C Human Rights - Other Issues

### United Nations

**6.47** Liberia is referred to under Security Council Resolution 1343 (2001), and is subject to a sanction regime. The reason for this action is because of the Liberian Government's continued support for the RUF

in Sierra Leone. Under this resolution the export of diamonds is proscribed, and there is an embargo on the importation of arms. [32][33]

**6.48** These sanctions are subject to regular review by the UN. There are reports that the country has acted as a base for RUF activity, and that it has also acted as a conduit for the export of diamonds mined by RUF in Sierra Leone. The UN reports that diamonds are smuggled out of Sierra Leone, into Liberia, and then exported to a third country; the profits being used to finance civil conflict in the region. [6][33][34][36] Some Liberians and foreign nationals are also subject to a visa ban, because of their involvement with RUF, and in UN proscribed activities within Liberia. [32][36]

**6.49** On the 1 August 2003, the UN Security Council sanctioned the deployment of a multi-national peacekeeping force to the region. This was at the request of the Secretary - General, and adopted as Resolution 1497 (2003). [46][47] Under Resolution 1509 (2003), a United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was sanctioned for a period of twelve months. This resolution stated that UNMIL is to be made up of 15,000 peacekeepers, whose primary mission is to monitor the peace agreement, and assist in the maintenance of law and order. [48]

### Humanitarian situation

**6.50** Reliable information on conditions outside the capital is hard to obtain, but conditions in Monrovia itself remain poor. There is a lack of medical supplies, food, and adequate sanitation, and these factors have made the provision of health care difficult. Many thousands have been displaced by the recent fighting, and have no access to adequate shelter, they are either living rough, or seeking refuge in schools, churches or other temporary shelters. [26][27]

**6.51** The Government controls the airport, with the assistance of peacekeepers. After the peace agreement was signed in Accra, rebel groups opened the port of Monrovia to international aid. However, the port was extensively looted in early August 2003. Rebels withdrawing from the city, and Liberians desperate to obtain food, were involved in this looting. The loss of supplies from warehouses in the port area has made the distribution of aid much harder for NGOs operating within the city. Peacekeepers have attempted to restore order to the port area, so as to permit the arrival of aid by sea. [30][41][42]

**6.52** The provisions of the peace agreement of 18 August 2003, allowed for the creation of a peacekeeping force, the disengagement of opposing force, and respect for a general cease-fire. On 4 August 2003, the first units of the Economic Community of West Africa Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) peacekeeping force, began to arrive at Roberts International Airport. Both rebel and Government forces have withdrawn from Monrovia, and are allowing peacekeepers to operate within the city. American forces were briefly deployed, and in early September 2003 there were units from Nigeria, Mali, Senegal and Gambia, with further West African forces due to be deployed in the country. [20][21][27][47]

**6.53** However, fighting continues in many areas. While this violence is marked by looting and rape, mostly by rival Government and rebel militias, there also appears to be a measure of co-ordination, especially by LURD. LURD is continuing to target strategic areas, and may be attempting to seize control before peacekeepers can be deployed. [43][44]

**6.54** Conditions within Monrovia have improved, but the provision of basic services remains poor. In the country generally, violent clashes between rebel and Government supporters, has made the provision of aid, and reporting on conditions in these areas, very difficult. [27][28] In July 2003, the UNHCR requested that Governments do not enforce the removal of failed Liberian asylum seekers for a period of six months. This was in response to the upsurge in violence, and the resulting difficulties in providing protection to the general population. [45]

## **ANNEX A: Chronology of Events**

**1847** - Liberia, founded by freed African slaves, becomes Africa's first independent republic on 26 July 1847.

**1871** - Americo-Liberian True Whig Party begin 109 years of uninterrupted political rule.

**1980** - In April, Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe stages a successful coup against President Tolbert. The Krahn-dominated People's Redemption Council (PRC) government becomes Liberia's first administration to be led by members of the indigenous population.

**1985** - In November, President Doe survives an unsuccessful coup attempt led by former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) Brigadier-General Thomas Quiwonkpa. The pro-Doe AFL massacre Mano and Gio tribes in Nimba county.

**1989** - In December, armed insurrection in Nimba county by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) begins the seven year civil war.

**1990** - The NPFL overcome government troops in Nimba county and go on to control all Liberian territory except Monrovia and its environs by May. The NPFL attacks government troops defending Monrovia and the Independent NPFL (INPFL) emerges. In August, Western diplomatic staffs are evacuated from Monrovia. ECOMOG troops arrive in Liberia in late August, and about the same time the AFL and INPFL form an alliance against the NPFL, but armed clashes between the AFL and INPFL begin soon after. Doe is captured and executed by the INPFL, whose leader, Yormie Johnson, declares himself President of Liberia. ECOMOG establishes a protectorate around Monrovia in October. The peace process was initiated on 30 August at the ECOWAS Conference in Banjul, where Dr Amos Sawyer is elected President of a new Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). A further step in 1990 is the Bamako Ceasefire Agreement, signed on 28 November, whereby Liberia is effectively partitioned between Taylor's National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) and the IGNU.

**1991** - In June, former supporters of Doe who had taken refuge in Sierra Leone form the ULIMO, which declares its opposition to the NPFL. In October, the Yamassoukro Accord is signed, whereby all factions were to be encamped and disarmed, and national elections to be held.

**1992** - ULIMO forces engage NPFL in Lofa county. In October, the NPFL launches Operation Octopus against Monrovia. In November, the UN Security Council imposes an arms embargo, and a special envoy to Liberia is appointed.

**1993** - In July, the IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO sign the Cotonou Agreement, whereby the IGNU is to be replaced with the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG), including a five-member Council of State, who are appointed in August. Presidential elections are scheduled for February 1994. UN establishes UNOMIL in September.

**1994** - In March, ULIMO splits into Krahn and Mandingo factions. In the same month, the LNTG Council of State is inaugurated, with David Kpomakpor as chairman. In September, the Akosombo Agreement was signed by the leaders of the major factions (NPFL, AFL and ULIMO-K), providing for an immediate ceasefire, a reconstituted Council of State, elections in October 1995 and the installation of a new government by January 1996, but disputes over power sharing prevent its implementation. In December, Akosombo II is signed, immediately following which a ceasefire is implemented, and a commitment to elections in late 1995 is confirmed.

**1995** - At the ECOWAS summit in August, the Abuja Accord is signed by all factions. A ceasefire is

confirmed and a reconstituted Council of State (LNTG II) subsequently established in September, including leaders of the major factions (NPFL, LPC and ULIMO-K), with Wilton Sankawulo as Chairman. Elections are scheduled for August 1996, and by December ECOMOG troops begin to deploy.

**1996** - In April, heavy fighting breaks out in Monrovia after Taylor's troops attempt to arrest Roosevelt Johnson, recently dismissed from the ruling Council on charges of murder. Hundreds of people are killed and the city is virtually destroyed in two months of intense violence. Peace is eventually restored following a further peace agreement signed in August in Abuja (Abuja II), whereby a reconstituted Council of State, with Ruth Perry as its chairman, is to be installed in September, armed factions are to be disarmed by the end of January 1997 and elections are to be held by the end of May 1997.

**1997** - ECOMOG implements disarmament plan. All warring factions order their troops to abide by the Abuja Accord and dismantle their military wings. Elections (originally scheduled for May) take place in July, with overwhelming victory for the NPP. Charles Taylor is declared President in August.

**1998 August** - tension flares around former warlord Johnson's home following the shooting of one of his bodyguards by ECOMOG troops.

September - Johnson takes refuge in the US Embassy in Monrovia following clashes between government troops and his supporters. Approximately 1 week later the US authorities fly Johnson out of the country.

November - 32 people, mostly ethnic Krahn supporters of Roosevelt Johnson, go on trial for treason. Johnson and another former warlord, Alhaji Kromah, are to be tried in absentia.

**1999 April** - Nine members of the armed forces and nineteen civilians, including some senior Krahn leaders who had been arrested after the clashes between supporters of Johnson and Liberian forces in September. The Government dropped charges against five of the civilian suspects in return for their testimony as state witnesses; the trial of the remaining fourteen civilian defendants was completed in April 1999. One defendant was acquitted, and the thirteen others were convicted of treason and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

**September** - ECOMOG forces were withdrawn from Liberia.

**2000 July** - President Taylor's intervention assists in the freeing of a number of UN peacekeepers held hostage by RUF in Sierra Leone. These peacekeepers were freed in Liberia, and then left the country.

**2001 December** - There are reports of an attempted coup.

**2002 February** - A state of emergency is declared.

**2003 March** - Rebel groups the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) launched a concerted offensive against Liberian Government forces. This captured a number of towns, and threatened the capital Monrovia.

**17 June 2003** - At a meeting between the Liberian Government, LURD and MODEL held in Accra Ghana, a truce was agreed. However, this was not respected.

**June and July** - Continued fighting between rebel and Government forces. Rebels, mostly from LURD, were able to capture areas of Monrovia, including the port area.

**11 August** - As part of an effort to achieve peace, President Taylor stood down from Office, and left the country for Nigeria. Vice President Moses Zeh Blah has replaced him as interim president.

**19 August** - A peace agreement was signed in Ghana by, LURD, MODEL, and the Liberian Government.



**ANNEX B: Political Organisations****AFL                    Armed Forces of Liberia**

Formerly the national army of Samuel Doe, Krahn-dominated but also with a significant number of Mandingos Led by General Hezekiah Bowen until October 1994. Has supported two armed factions: the LPC and ULIMO.

**ALCOP All Liberian Coalition Party**

Led by Lusinee Kamara it came third in the 19 July 1997 elections, winning 4% of the vote, with two seats in the Senate and three in the House of Representatives.

**APP                    Alliance of Political Parties**

Led by Cletus Wotorson of the LAP (Liberia Action Party), and comprising the LAP and the LUP (Liberia Unification Party), it won 3% of the total vote in the 19 July 1997 elections, obtaining two seats in the House of Representatives.

**BB                    Black Berets**

Created in Guinea by the IGNU in 1992, as a unit of several hundred soldiers from different ethnic groups.

**ECOMOG            ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group**

A peacekeeping multi-national force sent to Monrovia in August 1990 by the ECOWAS, and it left Liberia in 1999. In 1993, it was accused of impeding relief efforts and conducting its own attacks against non-combatant, neutral targets, and has also been criticised for allying itself with the AFL and ULIMO, both of which are known to have perpetrated serious human rights violations.

**ECOWAS            Economic Community of West African States**

An intergovernmental organisation of 16 West African states, with headquarters in Nigeria, whose aim is to promote economic development and regional co-operation.

**IGNU                   Interim Government of National Unity**

Seated in Monrovia from April 1991 until March 1994, under the protection of ECOMOG troops. In March 1994, it handed over power to the Transitional Government, in accordance with the terms of the Cotonou Agreement.

**INPFL               Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia**

A breakaway faction of the NPFL, led by Prince Yormie Johnson, a former senior NPFL lieutenant. Formed in 1990, by Prince Johnson it was disbanded in late 1992, following which many INPFL fighters rejoined the NPFL.

**LDF                   Lofa Defence Force**

Formed in 1993 to counter attacks from the Mandingo faction of ULIMO, it engaged in conflict with ULIMO forces in Lofa county. Aligned to the NPFL and led by Francis Massaquoi.

**LNC                   Liberian National Conference**

Organised by Liberian citizens to discuss aspects of the peace process in August 1994, it continued to discuss and make recommendations to the different parties involved in the conflict and peace negotiations.

**LNTG                Liberian National Transitional Government**

The first LNTG was installed in Monrovia in March 1994, and was presided over by a five-

member Council of State, elected by the three groups which signed the Cotonou Agreement (IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO), and led by David Kpomakpor. It was re-installed following the Abuja Accord of August 1995, and led by Wilton Sankawulo, and again following a further peace agreement a year later, under the leadership of Ruth Perry.

**LPC      Liberia Peace Council**

Formed in 1990, with predominantly Krahn support, it was engaged in conflict with NPFL forces in south-eastern Liberia from 1993, and in 1994 is said to have stepped up attacks against civilians, particularly those suspected of supporting the NPFL. Backed by the AFL and ULIMO.

**LPP      Liberia People's Party**

Led by Togba Nah-Tipoteh, it won 1.6% of the vote in the 19 July 1997 elections, obtaining one seat in the House of Representatives.

**LURD    Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy**

A rebel group reported to be backed by Guinea, and has received arms and supplies from there. The organisation appears to be highly capable, and may have links with other rebel groups. LURD draws most of its support from the Mandingo ethnic group, and its leader is reported Sehon Damate Conneh. There are also reports that Guinea is using LURD as a proxy force. Liberia and Guinea have in the past few years clashed repeatedly on their common border. LURD has also been described as ULIMO-K reorganised, and renamed.

**MODEL      Movement for Democracy in Liberia**

Southern based, backed by the Ivory Coast, and the Krahn tribe. It has been described as a wing of LURD, but appears to be organised along separate lines.

**NDPL      National Democratic Party of Liberia**

Led by Dr. George E. Saigbe Boley and a participant in the 19 July 1997 elections, it failed to gain sufficient votes to obtain any seats in either the House of Representatives or the Senate.

**NPFL      National Patriotic Front of Liberia**

Formed in December 1989, it began the civil war under the leadership of Charles Taylor, with an invasion into Nimba county that led to its control of large parts of Liberia. It acquired largely Gio and Mano membership, and is said to have been responsible for a number of atrocities committed against members of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups. Between 1990 and 1994, it controlled the bulk of Liberian territory. In 1994, a substantial faction of the NPFL split from Taylor, over doubts about his commitment to the peace process.

**NPP      National Patriotic Party**

Led by Charles Taylor, it won approximately 75% of the total vote, obtaining 21 out of the 26 seats in the Senate and 49 out of 64 in the House of Representatives in the 19 July 1997 elections.

**NPRAG      National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government**

Led by Charles Taylor, it was the instrument of NPFL rule over the bulk of Liberian territory between 1990 and 1994, based in Gbarnga, Bong county.

**PRC      People's Redemption Council**

Established by Samuel Doe on his assumption of power in 1980 and largely dominated by his Krahn ethnic group, it lasted until his overthrow in 1990.

**RRU      Rapid Response Unit**

Formed in 1995 to combat soaring violent crime in Monrovia, it was infiltrated and corrupted by the NPFL, and committed serious human rights abuses.

**ULIMO United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia**

Formed at Tubmanburg in 1991, by supporters of the late President Samuel Doe and members of the AFL. Split into two ethnic factions in 1994: ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K. The two factions have since effectively functioned as separate organisations.

**ULIMO-J United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Johnson**

Krahn faction of the original ULIMO, led by Roosevelt Johnson. In early 1996, ULIMO-J officials announced Johnson's deposition, resulting in a further split between Johnson's supporters and those loyal to the new leadership. In 1997, he converted the faction into a new pressure movement, called UDEMO (United Democratic Movement in Liberia), not a political party but dedicated to the principle of democratic rule.

**ULIMO-K United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Kromah**

Mandingo faction of the original ULIMO, led by Alhaji G V Kromah since 1994.

**UNOMIL United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia**

Established by the UN Security Council in September 1993, to monitor the ceasefire and disarmament process, supervise the demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, and to assist ECOMOG in overseeing the overall implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, UNOMIL was also given the task of assisting in the co-ordination of humanitarian relief and of reporting violations of international humanitarian law to the UN Secretary General. The UNOMIL mandate expired on 30 September 1997.

**UP Unity Party**

Led by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, it was the runner-up in the 19 July 1997 elections, but won only 9.6% of the total vote, thereby obtaining three seats in the Senate and seven in the House of Representatives.

**UPP United People's Party**

Led by Wesley Johnson, it won approximately 3% of the vote in the elections on 19 July 1997, thereby obtaining two seats in the House of Representatives.

**ANNEX C: Prominent People**

**Dr George Boley:** Founder and leader of Liberia Peace Council. Led the NDPL in the July 1997 elections, but failed to gain sufficient votes to secure any seats in the Senate or House of Representatives.

**Moses Zeh Blah:** Was Vice President under President Taylor, has replaced him as interim president.

**Sehon Damate Conneh:** Leader of LURD. He left Liberia in 1990 for Guinea, returned briefly in 1997. He is from the Mandingo ethnic group, and is reported to have close links to the Guinean President Lansana Conteh.

**Samuel Kanyon Doe:** Former Non-Commissioned Officer in the Armed Forces of Liberia. Led coup against Tolbert government in 1980 and assumed power as leader of the People's Redemption Council. Publicly executed in September 1990.

**Karpeh Dwanyen:** Leader of the NRC, a Gio and Mano anti-NPFL group, formed in 1993 and based in <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ppage.asp?section=4379&title=Liberia%2C%20Country%20Informat...> 11/18/2003

Nimba county.

**Prince Yormie Johnson:** Former teacher, who joined Taylor's NPFL at the beginning of the civil war. Split to lead the Independent NPFL in 1990, when he tortured and killed ex-President Doe in September. Fled Liberia in October 1992.

**Gen. Roosevelt Johnson:** Commander of Krahn ULIMO-J faction, since it split from the original ULIMO in 1994. In 1997, converted the faction into UDEMO, and following the July elections was appointed Transport Minister in the new government.

**Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf:** Former Finance Minister during the Doe government. Imprisoned in 1985 for criticising Doe, and fled Liberia in 1986. United Nations Development Programme Director for Africa. Led the UP to second place in the July 1997 elections, but won only 9.6% of the vote.

**David Kpomakpor:** President of the first LNTG, installed in Monrovia in March 1994 and remaining until August 1995.

**Alhaji G V Kromah:** Leader of the Mandingo ULIMO-K, since the original ULIMO split in 1994. In the July 1997 elections, led the ALCOP to third place. In December 1997, was appointed chairman of the national reconciliation commission.

**Francis Massaquoi:** Leader of the LDF, which engaged in conflict with ULIMO forces in Lofa county from 1993.

**Thomas Nimely Yaya:** Chairman of MODEL, a long time resident in America and an American citizen. He is from the Krahn ethnic group

**Ruth Sando Perry:** Senator during the Doe government was elected chairman of the transitional Council of State in August 1996, becoming President of LNTG in September 1996.

**Prof Wilton Sankawulo:** President of the second LNTG, installed following the Abuja Accord of August 1995, and remaining for one year thereafter.

**Dr Amos Sawyer:** Leader of the LPP, appointed as President of the IGNU in August 1990 and inaugurated in November 1990. In March 1994, handed over power to the first LNTG.

**Charles Ghankay Taylor:** President of the Republic of Liberia. Former Ministry of Finance official under Doe. Formed the NPFL and started civil war in 1989. Self-declared President of Liberia in 1990. Survived an assassination attempt in October 1996. Appointed to the transitional Council of State in August 1995. Leader of the National Patriotic Party (NPP), elected President on 19 July 1997 and inaugurated on 2 August 1997. As part of a peace agreement, President Taylor stood down from Office in 11 August 2003, and then left Liberia for Nigeria.

## LIBERIA COUNTRY REPORT

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### COUNTRY INFORMATION & POLICY UNIT

#### ANNEX D - REFERENCES TO SOURCE MATERIAL

##### [Part I](#)

[Part II](#)**ANNEX D: References to Source Material**

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